

Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*)

Common Names: Ginseng root, Chinese ginseng, red ginseng and Korean ginseng.

Location: This herb can be found in Siberia, North Korea and China.

Description: The root of the ginseng herb is used medicinally.

Properties: Ginseng is one of the most well known herbs used for healing. According to Phyllis Balch in *Prescriptions for Herbal Healing* (2002), “Ginseng has been a part of Chinese medicine for over 2,000 years. It was traditionally used to curb emotions, stop agitation, brighten eyes, enlighten the mind and increase wisdom.”

Uses: This herb can be used to treat cancer, anxiety, Lyme disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, cognitive ability, hangover, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attack, infertility, impotence, diminished sex drive, stress and menopause related ailments.

Doses: This herb can be found as a tea, tincture or capsule.

Warnings: Ginseng can occasionally cause breast tenderness and menstrual abnormalities for women.

People have reported experiencing insomnia or over stimulation after taking ginseng. Some side effects of a ginseng overdose include dizziness, headache, fever and hemorrhage. Pregnant women and nursing mothers should not take ginseng. Avoid ginseng two weeks prior to undergoing surgery.

Red Ginseng Root Profile

Also known as

Panax ginseng, Asian ginseng, and Korean ginseng

Introduction

Red ginseng derives its name from the color that it takes on during a special preservation method that involves being steamed (and then sometimes sun dried) with the peel intact. During the drying process the root is steeped in a bath of an ancient, and often protected herbal recipe, which includes a combination of honey or wine and this process causes the root to become brittle in texture. Red ginseng usually always comes from China or Korea, and it is considered slightly stronger and more stimulating than white ginseng. In traditional Chinese medicine ginseng is said to promote *yang* energy, improve circulation, and restore balance and strength.

Parts Used

The whole root

Typical Preparations

Teas, extracts, or sometimes in capsules. More recently it has found its way into the energy drink market.

Summary

In Asia, wars have been fought over possession of fields where ginseng grew abundant and wild. Ginseng is a known adaptogen, which helps the body adapt to stress, and to help balance itself. A vast amount of research has been done over the last 20 years that has gone a long way in proving that ginseng does have properties that improve memory, mental acumen, and in relieving stress and fatigue. The German E Commission has noted that used as a tonic, it may help fortify and invigorate in times of fatigue, or in times when great concentration may be needed.

Precautions

Most herbalists do not recommend that anyone use ginseng of any type for more than a few weeks without taking a week or so off to "rest".